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TAGS: [KDEM](#) [PGOV](#) [IZ](#)

SUBJECT: PRT WASIT: CHAIR OF IHEC'S PROVINCIAL OFFICE  
THREATENS RESIGNATION OVER DEATH THREATS

REF: BAGHDAD 2658

Classified By: Acting Political Counselor William R. Roebuck for reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY. During a routine weekly meeting on Wednesday, Oct. 7, Wasit IHEC Chairman Dr. Khadem Abdallah Hussien told Acting Team Leader (ATL) Schlaefer and PDO Steve Smith that he would likely resign in a short period, in response to harsh criticism and a series of death threats. An emotional Khadem broke down in front of the PRT representatives and twice had to leave the room to regain his composure. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (C) The Chairman of Wasit Province Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC) Dr. Khadem Abdallah Hussientold acting Team Leader and PDO that approximately one week ago, while delivering routine remarks on the electoral process at the University of Wasit, detractors publicly accused him of incompetence, fraud, and bias toward the Dawa party. Khadem, a Sunni, said that he was also accused of prejudice against Shia. Subsequent to the University event, additional allegations and criticisms have been leveled against Khadem, shaking his confidence in his ability to continue as IHEC Chair. He implied that the national-level criticism of IHEC and interrogation of the national chairman of IHEC at the Council of Representatives (COR) was connected with the sudden activity at the Provincial level to drive him from office (Ref A).

¶3. (C) More ominously, Khadem said that he and his family had received numerous death threats during this time, most in the form of phone calls and text messages. Khadem has received threats before, but he said that these were different, although he declined to specify what the exact difference was. While speaking of the threats, he was overcome by sobbing and had to excuse himself. Khadem said that he had not reported these threats to the IP or IA. When the ATL asked why he had not reported the threats, Khadem refused to reply, staring down at his desk while crying.

¶4. (C) The ATL urged Khadem to consider his options carefully before resigning. Allowing threats of violence to force him from office on the eve of national elections would be a victory for those elements that want Iraq to fail, and could potentially compromise the effectiveness of IHEC's Wasit operations. The ATL told Khadem that the PRT, which has worked very closely with Khadem and IHEC, was ready to support him and would be willing to engage with the IP and other security forces to attempt to arrange improved security for him. Khadem rejected the offer of assistance, obliquely referring to rumors that he and IHEC were American shells, and implying that proactive U.S. assistance might actually do more harm than good. When asked who might replace him if he does resign, Khadem said that anyone "with impartiality" would experience the same thing he was experiencing, suggesting he believed his replacement would possibly be someone open to influence. The ATL also asked if Khadem thought the threats came from extremists that wanted to totally disrupt the electoral process, or elements that

wanted to game it for their own advantage. He suggested the latter dynamic, but throughout the one hour meeting declined to offer his thoughts on who was behind the death threats.

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15. (C) During this meeting, Khadem was distraught and physically shaking, giving the impression of a man under intense stress who was terrified. He pointedly and awkwardly fell instantly silent when lower-level IHEC employees entered his office to serve tea, and appeared to trust no one in his office. ATL also noticed that the office was virtually deserted. The usual crowd of hangers-on was wholly absent, with only a few lower level staff remaining. Khadem's chief deputies were also absent, although he explained that in one case, the man was away on assignment in Badra. As troubling was his refusal to offer any explanation as to why he has not contacted the police. If Khadem resigns, Wasit's IHEC office should still be able to handle logistics for January, as long as other key personnel remain intact. So far this account from Wasit remains an interesting but isolated incident. It is, however, emblematic of the darker side of the politicized campaign of verbal attacks and intense pressure against IHEC at the national level. Out in Wasit province, at least, such pressure on IHEC has become personal and it is obviously exacting a human toll.

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